

Historic Structures Report  
Oconee County High School Complex:  
Rocket Hall and School Street Studios



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## **Introduction**

This historic structure report covers two buildings: the Oconee High School's historic Rocket Hall and School Street Studios (formerly the vocational school and later the kindergarten). The focus of this report is Rocket Hall—complete with a conditions assessment, work recommendations, description and more. The work included in this report on School Street Studios is primarily to develop a base of information for a future, more in-depth report.

The study of Rocket Hall has revealed that this structure has played a significant role in the history of Watkinsville and the larger community of Oconee County. As a continuous center for community and school events, Rocket Hall is a venue that has defined most of the influential years of the students who attended OCHS. Today the structure serves the Oconee County Arts Foundation (OCAF), which uses it as a venue for various events. Although the structure is still in use, significant deterioration threatens the stability of the structure and work to repair it is critical to the future of this site as a community gathering place.

# **Part 1: Developmental History**

## Historical Background and Context

Georgia has spent the bulk of its history as an agrarian state. Both before and after the Civil War, the countryside has been defined by fields, farmers and small towns. Yet industrialization has had its effect on Georgia. In the 1850's and 60's, cotton mills, syrup mills and grist mills became common place and made an impact on cities. In conjunction with this growing trend came crop depression. In the 1890s the cotton depression caused farmers to diversify crops and work to change the landscape of Georgia. All of this led to the slow rise of the rural town in Georgia. Towns developed as market places, mill towns, boom towns, railroad stops, health springs, and resort communities. As stagecoach routes gave way to railroads and railroads to cars, these towns rose and fell with them.<sup>1</sup>

The late 1920s and 1930s changed agricultural life significantly. The boll weevil decimated crops. The Rural Electrification Program, part of the New Deal initiative, brought electricity to many famers. During this period urbanization and movement to towns was also on the rise. Better roads helped the tide of industrialization and the transportation and communication improved by leaps and bounds with the automobile, flight, telephones, and electricity.<sup>2</sup>

Watkinsville at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was very rural and its economy was based off of agriculture. Dirt roads meant difficult transportation and a population that went to town only for business or other important reasons. Although it was small, Watkinsville was important; it served as the county seat of Clarke, then of Oconee County after 1874.<sup>3</sup> Watkinsville experienced rapid change after 1900. Oconee's

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<sup>1</sup> Georgia and the Department of Archives and History, *Vanishing Georgia*, (Athens: University of Georgia

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Albert Wimpy Ward, *O.C.H.S. Yearbooks That Never Were 1929-1945: Commemorating the Graduates of Oconee County High School in the Depression and War Years* (McLean, Va.: A.W. Ward, 2002).

population reached a high point in 1910 and experienced increasing quality of transportation by 1920.

At this time Watkinsville was also noted for its superior school system, and in 1902 the school system expanded to include the first high school in the county.<sup>4</sup> This new school was, in part, a reaction to newly passed legislation, which created a public school system in every county. There were practical reasons for the building of the school as well. In 1895, there were 2,398 students in Oconee County: 607 white males; 616 white females; 568 colored males; and 616 colored females. This population was handled by 28 white schools and 22 colored schools, none of which belonged to the county board of education.<sup>5</sup> Professor A.W. Brooks saw necessity for a new school and started a campaign for a new, brick school in the Watkinsville community. Thus, the red brick Oconee High School building was built.<sup>6</sup> A charter was withheld until entering students could complete four years of academic work; resulting in the first diplomas being granted in 1906.<sup>7</sup> It served the entire county and, due to poor transportation infrastructure, required most out-of-towners to board in Watkinsville.

Slowly but surely; rural schools consolidated and more and more students went to OCHS. The constituency of the school system grew as the bus system made attending OCHS more feasible. This strain led to the necessity of additions to the school around 1918. The size of the school was doubled. In a matter of a few years, this addition became obsolete as well and another addition was done in the 1920s.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Margaret F. Sommer, *The History of Oconee County, Georgia* (Dallas, Tex.: Curtis Media, 1993).

<sup>6</sup> Ward, *O.C.H.S. Yearbooks*, 2.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

At the time of OCHS's construction, it was the largest school in the county. It was designed by Charles E. Choate, a U.S. architect who worked in Georgia, Florida, and Alabama. Choate designed several buildings that are now listed on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places:

First Methodist Episcopal Church, Stillmore, Georgia; Holt Brothers Banking Company Building, Sandersville, GA; James E. Johnson House, Sandersville, GA; James Kelley House, Tennille, GA; Charles Madden House, Tennille, GA; Park Street Methodist Episcopal Church, Atlanta, GA; and others...<sup>8</sup>

Choate was a student at the University of Georgia in 1889. He studied architecture through a set of internships years after. He worked for Peter Dennis in Macon, Georgia, George Thompson in Dublin, Georgia, and Joseph Turner in Augusta, Georgia.<sup>9</sup> He became partner with Wesley W. DeHaven to form DeHaven and Choate in 1892.<sup>10</sup> Choate also studied to become Methodist minister during his pursuits as an architect.

Around 1900, Choate gave up the ministry and focused on his career as an architect. As he developed his skills, he became a notable regional designer all around Augusta. In 1903 he published a brochure of his designs at the time which included High Victorian and Neoclassical designs. Choate's most active period was between 1896 and 1919. Dominant architectural themes in the country at this time included: Queen Anne, Victorian Eclectic, Romanesque, Neoclassical and Craftsman. Choate worked within these styles but he added his own flavor to them.

### Oconee County High School

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<sup>8</sup> [http://nrhp.focus.nps.gov/natreg/docs/All\\_Data.html](http://nrhp.focus.nps.gov/natreg/docs/All_Data.html)

<sup>9</sup> <http://pdfhost.focus.nps.gov/docs/NRHP/Text/64500131.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

The Oconee County School, built in 1902, was a two story schoolhouse (cover pictured below). This building was added on to significantly in the early 1910s and again in the early 1920s. The majority of the building burnt down in 1954 and only the later additions remain (excluding areas of the original rear wall of the schoolhouse). The building is now one-story and has received another addition of an entryway and two offices flanking the new entryway.

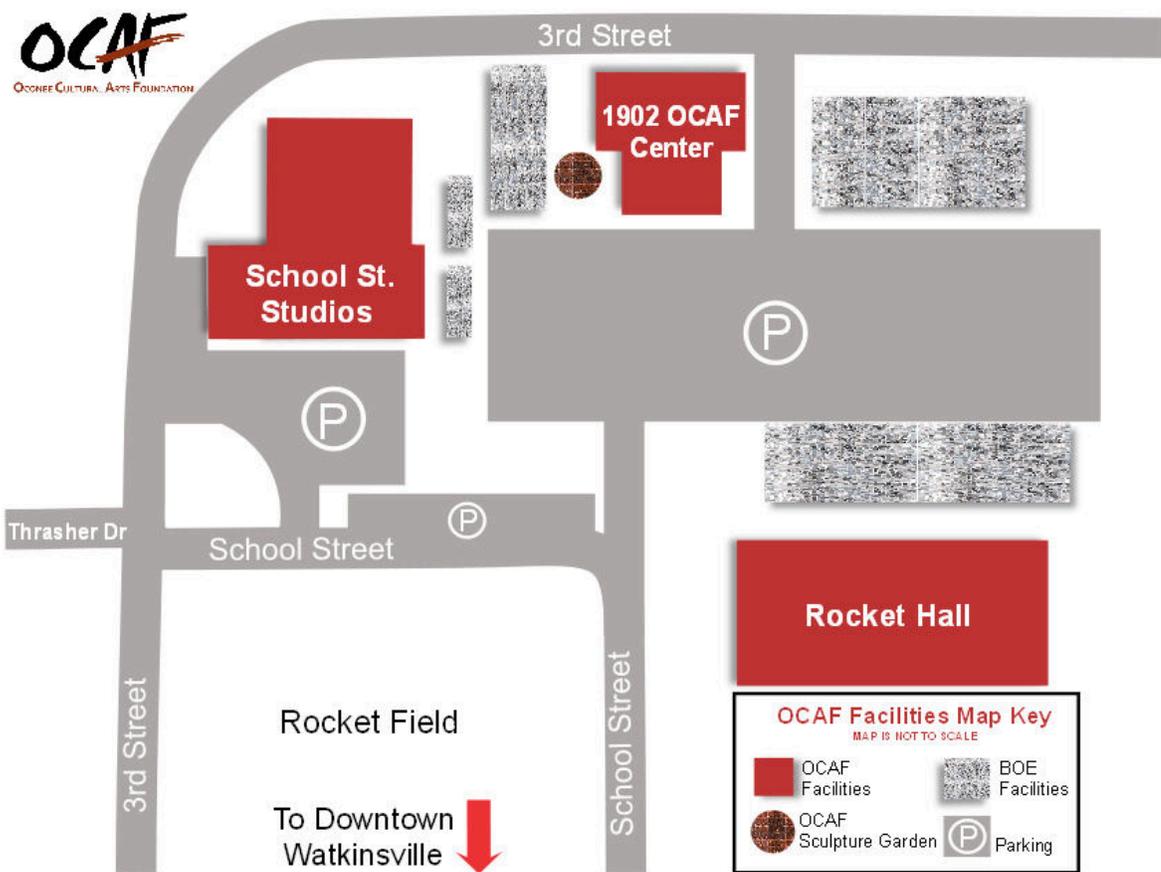
The original 1902 structure is almost completely gone. Only bits of the rear wall remain. What does remain is the first floor of the 1918 and 1925 additions. It is all one story now with a flat roof. More recently, the front of the building was renovated to include an added entryway and two offices centered on the southwestern façade. The addition matches well with the original building style and design excluding the windows.





### The Grounds

The Oconee County High School grounds consist of three major contributing structures and five more recent structures, two of which were built to serve the Oconee County School system. The three main structures are the 1902 Oconee County High School, the 1933 Rocket Hall, and the 1937 School Street Studios. This complex makes up the larger chunk of the block bordered by 3<sup>rd</sup> street, 2<sup>nd</sup> street and Simonton Bridge Road. The complex is serviced by School Street, which bisects the block halfway and leads to the school buildings. The School Street Studios lies on the northern corner of the block. Oconee County High School is southeast of the studios, and Rocket Hall is southwest of the high school building, sitting on the corner of School Street and Thrasher Drive.



OCHS Grounds

# **Evaluation of Significance**

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The OCHS school grounds and gym have considerable local significance in the history of architecture, education and recreation in Georgia. OCHS is a product of the diffusion of the colonial revival and craftsman aesthetics in America. It is an example of the craftsmanship of a regionally prominent architect Charles E. Choate. Rocket Hall exhibits the local efforts and construction techniques of carpenters and other craftsman. Contextually OCHS relates to the evolution of public education in America and especially to the rural evolution of the schoolhouse and grounds. Rocket Hall is an example of how education became entwined with local communities through recreation—in this case basketball. This evolution was a product of local initiatives and state-wide legislation. The site meets National Register Criterion C in the area of Architecture as an example of the architectural influence and diversity of a prominent Georgia architect, Charles E. Choate. The site also meets National Register Criterion A in the area of public education and recreation in rural Georgia.

The construction of OCHS in 1902 was related to a statewide public legislation initiative to develop school districts in counties. OCHS was a direct result of this and is the first example of a school district in Oconee County. The construction of OCHS is also related to the growing needs of a community due to their historical environment. OCHS was built to deal with the rising population of rural Georgia due to industrialization, trade and transportation. The school reveals through historic additions how the school system dealt with the evolving constituency. This was characteristic of many schools of the day. Adding auditoriums, gymnasiums, and public transportation were methods used to attract and deal with rising student populations.

These additions are not only symptoms of historical tides but they are architecturally significant. The original schoolhouse is unfortunately almost completely burnt down, but the auditorium and 1918 additions still remain. The historical data and heritage contained in the construction techniques are similar to those of the original building. The lack of integrity for the original structure may take away from the connection with Choate, but it is still one of the few examples of his schools and exhibits the regional influence of his work.

The construction of Rocket Hall in 1933 is indicative of the close connection between organized high school sports and community pride in rural Georgia. The building of this gym took place when resources were extremely scarce. The community rallied under the initiative of Superintendent Phillips and created a community meeting spot to watch local athletes. The construction of this building is also contextually related to New Deal programs of the 1930's and their effect on rural Georgia. The gymnasium might not have been completed had the money not been received in time. Furthermore, the School Street Studios building was built completely with WPA money.

The gymnasium itself is architecturally important, although little is known of the builders. Some sources suggest that an architect designed the building; however, this is most likely untrue.<sup>11</sup> The vernacular craftsmen design is a direct result of the proposed function, locally donated materials, and labor. Carpenters working for 15 cents an hour constructed this building in four months and it still stands today, largely in good condition.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Ward, *O.C.H.S. Yearbooks*.

<sup>12</sup> The southeast corner of the building is resting on the ground and has rotted off of the brick piers which supported it. Termite damage is visibly present, although it appears inactive at the present time.

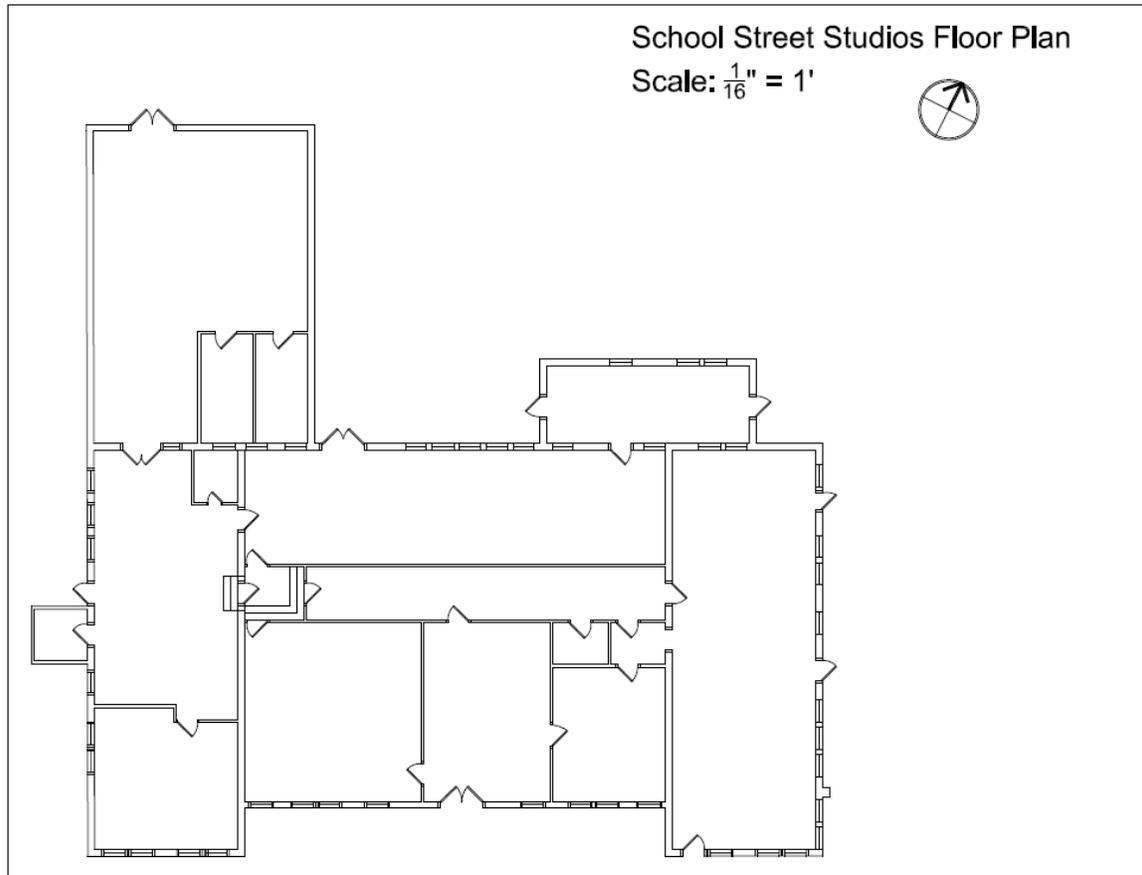
The association of the OCHS and grounds with historical events and trends like the New Deal programs, public education, rural community development and recreation make it a local landmark in the community. Today the Oconee Cultural Arts Foundation occupies the space and maintains it as a vital community center. Communal events still take place in Rocket Hall and the OCHS schoolhouse houses their main offices and galleries. The unification of the arts and history grants a communal sense of self that will last for years. The OCHS schoolhouse and grounds are no doubt deserving of listing on the National Register.

# **School Street Studios**



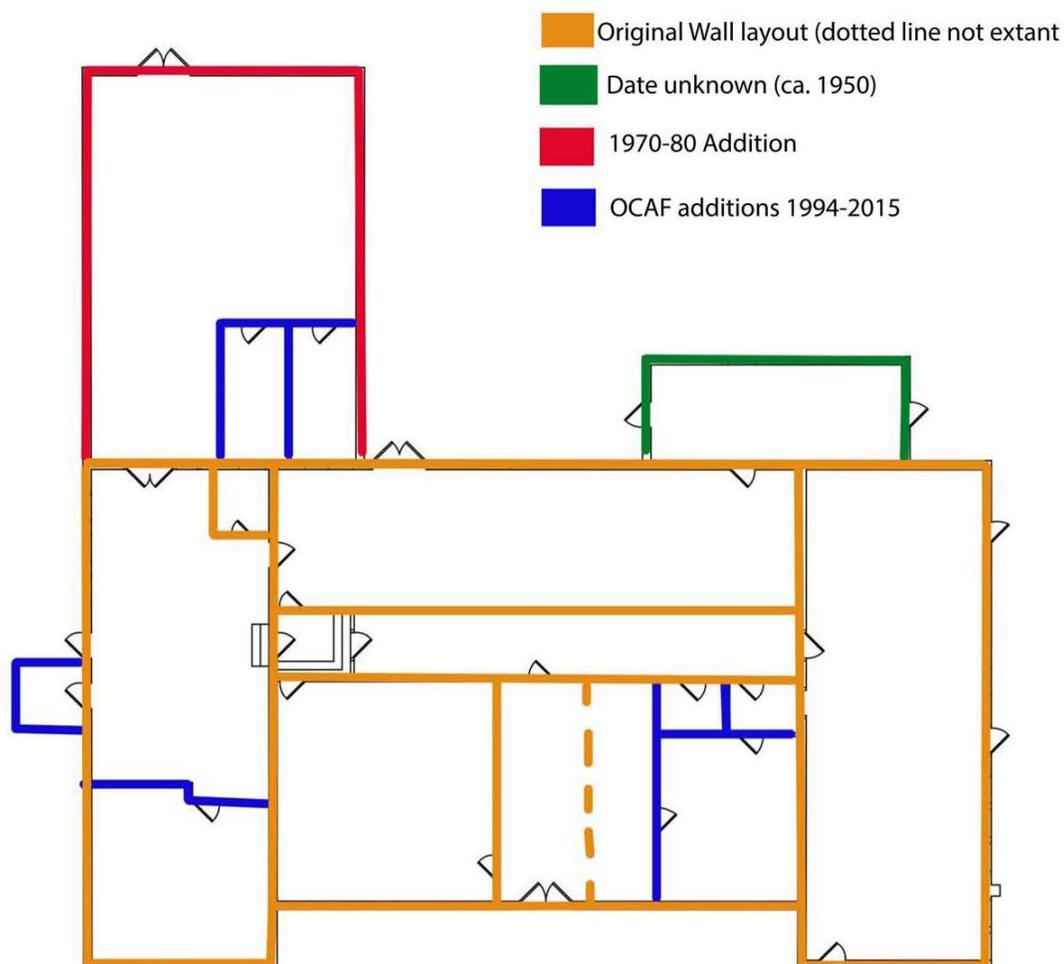
### **Chronology of Development and Use**

School Street Studios was built in 1937, shortly after Rocket Hall, with WPA money. This money was originally received to help finish Rocket Hall and more was secured to create School Street Studios in order to facilitate new educational obligations. This building was originally used as the vocational school, housing the agricultural and home economics programs. School Street Studios also housed a canning plant when it was built. This plant was located in the large rectangular room at the back of the building. When the high school left in 1956, the building was used as part of the elementary campus until 1968. After the elementary system left, the building housed the Kindergarten until 1987.



The original 1937 structure consists of the three part plan pictured below. The major addition (as seen on the plan view) is the rectangular area in the northwest corner of the building. This space was added in the late 1970s/early 80s to serve as a garage for the OCHS school busses. The appendage on the west side of the plan is a bathroom added around 2001. The kiln structure (north corner) was added at an unknown time, but appears to be older (perhaps 1950s).

## School Street Studios Changes to Structure



The School Street Studios building has experienced relatively little permanent alterations since its acquisition by OCAF. Besides the bathroom addition, most alterations have occurred within the structure. The southern third of the left wing is

partitioned off as an office/storage area. The original entry corridor (bottom middle) was expanded to the east. The original wall was removed and the structural pillars remain. The current partitions reside in what was originally the right classroom (mirroring the west square room) are wooden stud walls. The most significant alteration that OCAF made to the structure was a removal of the floor of the east wing. The floor and substructure was badly deteriorated when they acquired the structure and needed to be removed. OCAF carpenters stabilized the foundations and structural beams which were most affected and the space is un-floored.

### **Physical Description**

Built in 1904, the School Street Studios were originally used as a kindergarten for the community. Its foundation is concrete, its exterior is made of brick masonry, and it has eleven bays at front. The originally square-shaped building sits catty-corner on its lot, to the north of the educational OCAF complex. Additionally, the building has two chimneys and a wooden stoop porch with a half-hip roof at the front. The hipped roof is part metal, and part asphalt shingle. What is left of the original windows are flat-headed, double-hung, nine-over-nine sash windows with orange wood trim, while the modern replacement windows are two-pane, single-sash with black metal trim. Two modern additions are attached to the back of the school. The building has twelve external doors, four of which belong to additions; the front door is a double door. The exterior of the building has been mostly ravaged by water damage.

Within its square shape, the educational building houses a three-part plan with wings. The studios contain ten rooms, with a multitude of closets attached. Walking through the front through administrative offices, the building progresses to the studios at

back and sides. These rooms only show normal wear and tear. One room in particular causes room for pause, though. The “dirt room” as it has been coined is a complete disaster of a space. It no longer has flooring - just dirt ground - patches of the ceiling are gone while other patches are damp with what looks to be water damage, areas of the wall, wood siding, and beadboard are gone, windows are boarded up, and there are holes in the concrete foundation that were once ventilation but now are only doors for water.

### **Condition Assessment**

Built in 1904, the School Street Studios were originally used as a kindergarten for the community. Within its square shape, the educational building houses a three-part plan with wings. Its foundation is concrete, and its exterior is made of brick masonry. Additionally, the building has two chimneys and a wooden stoop porch at the front. Complete with a hipped tin roof and double-hung nine-over-nine sash windows, the kindergarten still retains some original characteristics. According to a 2005 *FindIt* survey, the building is significant in the category of architecture due to its uniqueness.

Currently the building is stabilized, but conservation work could be done to help. The school does not rest on foundation piers, instead utilizing concrete walls throughout. There is significant rising damp along the bottom of the building on all four sides, with the whitewash/paint falling off and leaving the brick exposed. The tin roof appears sound however the wood trim overhang looks to be deteriorating. Exterior windows on the school’s right side and back have been replaced with new windows without historic character; some windows to the west side and north are gone, and plywood currently protects the openings. The double front door seems to be in good condition, but the

double back door is missing one half of the original. Three side doors have also been replaced.

The interior of the building is cramped with renovations and remodeling. What was originally two square front spaces, a hall behind spanning the horizontal length, a rectangular room, and two side wings now is divided into offices and educational spaces. Partition walls separate the school's original east classroom into three office spaces and a hall. The school's original west classroom remains intact. An addition hangs off the back of the school's west wing. The school's east wing is a junk room. No flooring remains - rather, Georgia red clay lies under foot. The foundation is exposed, and the wood siding of the interior walls is falling off. No trim remains along the windows. Portions of the ceiling are missing, revealing the attic beams. The horizontal hall has two closets, but its flooring suddenly shifts from the old wood of the east wing to linoleum that covers it through to the west wing. The west wing has been converted into an art studio. The original siding remains, but the floor is now concrete.

The biggest issue at present is the east wing. It is currently deteriorating at a much faster rate than the rest of the building. The clay ground has several wet patches, so the source of the water must be fixed before installing a floor. Leveling the clay, repairing the water damage to the foundation, and adding a floor are some of the first steps. The walls are currently shedding their siding and wainscoting. This could be from damp or other mechanical damage. Find the source, as with the foundation water damage, and repair in kind.

The missing ceiling pieces must also be addressed, as they are a break in the barrier to the attic. Having the attic open to the lower levels leaves it vulnerable to

damages otherwise avoided. An inspection of the attic would provide data on the timeline of decay, as well as insight to new issues contained in the space. Clear the attic for damages, and replace the ceiling pieces in kind. The trim around the doors and the windows is missing and therefore needs to be replaced. Replacing the trim aids with aesthetics and acts to further protect the structure from the elements. The rest of the building seems to be relatively stable. Aesthetic work, like repainting the siding and tearing up the linoleum, can be done. On the whole the structure is stable and in good condition.

# **Rocket Hall**

## Chronology of Development and Use

Construction for the new gym began early Wednesday morning under the direction of Mr. C.C. Parsons on August 15, 1933.<sup>13</sup> Claude Phillips, superintendent of Oconee County High School at the time, had been campaigning for months to convince townspeople that OCHS needed a gymnasium for its basketball games.<sup>14</sup> Previously, games were held on dirt courts and many travelling teams did not want to play at Watkinsville as a result. This effort began in the middle of the Great Depression and was a hard sell. To deal with the hard times, it was proposed that the gym be constructed with volunteer labor and donated materials.<sup>15</sup> The community got engaged and the project went strong for a while, but financial strain began to take its toll.

As part of President Roosevelt's New Deal, Congress appropriated a \$500 million Federal Relief Fund. This money targeted already proposed projects or those in progress and lacking funds. The OCHS gymnasium received a grant and was able to pay the carpenters to finish the project which was at a standstill.<sup>16</sup> Thanks to the new funds and continuous community support, the gym was finished four months after construction started.

A dedication ceremony was held on Thursday, December 12<sup>th</sup>. The gym's opening ceremony received considerable attention from the community, interest even stretched to Atlanta. In a write up about the ceremony, *The Atlanta Constitution* declared Phillips Hall (Rocket Hall) "...one of the finest gymnasiums in the state."<sup>17</sup> The

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<sup>13</sup> "Work on Athletic Building Started," *The Oconee Enterprise* vol. 48, no. 33, Watkinsville, Georgia.

<sup>14</sup> Albert Wimpy Ward, "The Gym (Phillips Hall / Rocket Hall)," from Margaret F. Sommer's compilation *History of Oconee County Georgia*.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> The exact amount is unknown.

<sup>17</sup> "Watkinsville Is Proud As New Gym Is Opened," *The Atlanta Constitution* vol. LXVI., No. 185. Atlanta, GA. December 15, 1933.

ceremony was marked by a dinner accompanied by two basketball games: one boy's and one girl's game.<sup>18</sup> The article elaborates, "The building is a monument to the remarkable community spirit of this splendid little city. It was carried on as a community affair with everyone taking a hand on helping Claude Phillips...create the recreation center for eh boys and girls of Oconee County."<sup>19</sup> Another statement of the gymnasiums importance was stated by Abit Nix, gubernatorial candidate in 1932:

This building means better citizenship for the state and for Oconee County. It is a remarkable tribute to the industry and the community loyalty of this county. Athletic recreation is essential to the young boy and girl of today. In creating this remarkable building you have done a fine thing. Because the future of the state depends on how we train the youth of today.<sup>20</sup> What was once thought no more than Claude Phillips' "dream" by many townspeople became a reality after little over a year of planning and construction.<sup>21</sup>

After its construction, many community and school events were held at the gymnasium: proms, alumni banquets and other social functions. The building also served other school functions. Space was allotted above the dressing rooms to house the Home Economics Department, and as the school grew the space came to house the first school lunchroom. After School Street Studios was built and the Home Economics classes were relocated, Rocket Hall served as an overflow area for larger classes. The gym continued to be used for OCHS functions and basketball games until 1963. After the high school left the grounds the gym saw moderate use from the remaining elementary program that remained on site until the 1980s. Community sporting events and other gatherings were also continuously held there.

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<sup>18</sup> Both teams lost to the Athens boys and girls teams: 26-18 and 26-4 respectively.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

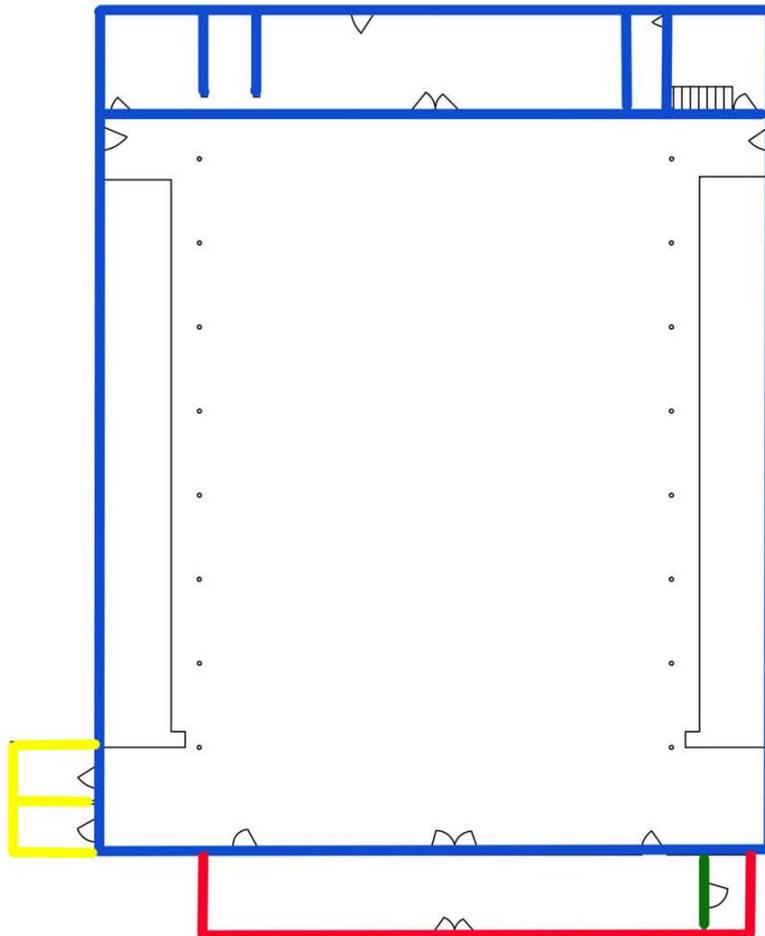
<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> "Gym Is Dedicated At Watkinsville," *The Oconee Enterprise* vol. 48, no. 50, Watkinsville, Georgia.

## 1933 Rocket Hall Floor Plan



- Original gym structure
- Pre 1946 addition to porch
- Bathrooms added in the early 1950s
- Partition placed by OCAF ca. 2000



OCAF obtained use of the old OCHS grounds in 1994 and has maintained the space as a community center, which houses various OCAF events. Today Rocket Hall, School Street Studios and what is left of the original high school is owned and

maintained by OCAF. OCAF, founded in 1994, is an all-volunteer nonprofit arts center that serves Oconee County. Its mission involves developing programs and classes for the performing, visual and literary arts. The foundation also holds community events and helps support local artists. The buildings are used for community arts events, classes and performances.



Over the years only a few additions have been made and it is apparent that the major additions are old as well. The enclosed porch was a very early addition which was constructed before 1946. The bathrooms, located on the northwest corner of the building were added in the early 1950s. The handicap ramp and deck were added after OCAF acquired the property and most recently (after 2003), the ramp was rerouted.



### **Physical Description**

Rocket Hall is a basketball gymnasium. It sits on a gently sloping lot in Watkinsville, Georgia. The building faces the northwest and sits back about twenty yards from School Street. It is part of the old Oconee High School complex. The complex is situated around a baseball field with School Street Studios to the north, the old high school to the northeast and Rocket Hall to the east. The grounds are surrounded by residential neighborhoods, but are not far from downtown Watkinsville (about three blocks). The building stands two stories tall, but only has a single second story space located above the locker rooms and storage space. The building is defined by the basketball court, with its two story open space. This space is flanked on either side by a

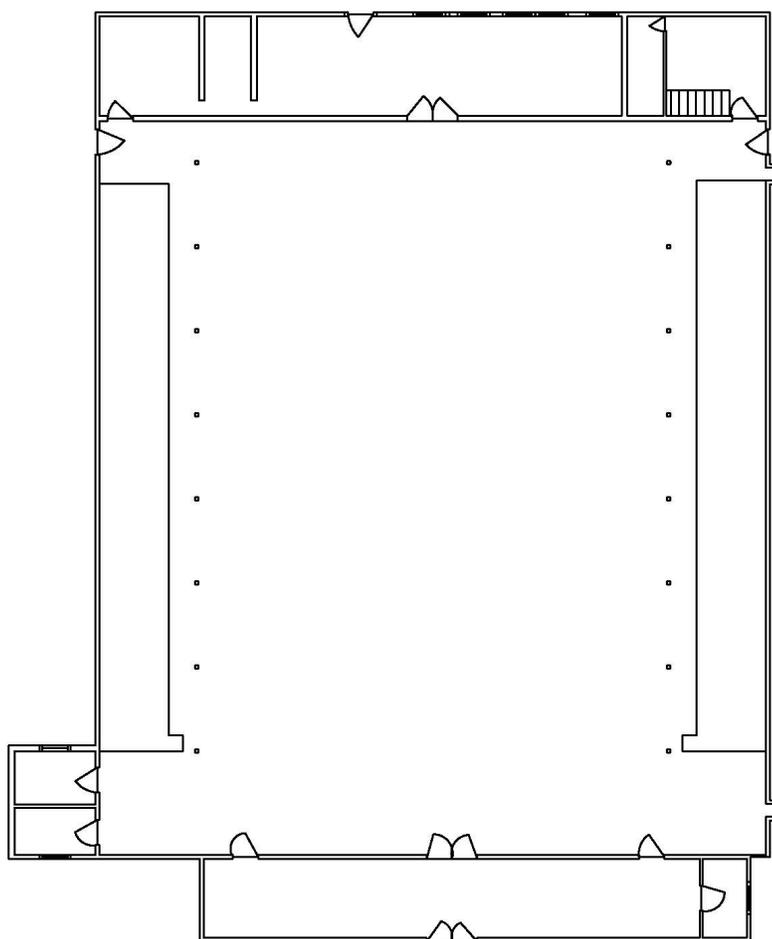
one story space which houses the stands. At this intersection of roof heights there is a row of pillars supporting the clearstory wall structure above.



The overall shape and plan of the building is rectangular. The basketball court lies at the center of the building with the servicing rooms (locker rooms, bathrooms, storage etc.) surrounding it. There is a single story entrance porch, added before 1947, with a double doorway that allowed for circulation and ticket gathering/purchasing before basketball games. The entrance to the porch lines up with the entrance to the gymnasium, similarly with double doors.

# 1933 Rocket Hall Floor Plan

Scale:  $\frac{1}{16}'' = 1'$



One locker room is in the east corner, the other in the south. Each locker room has a separated shower area. The locker rooms are separated by a storage space, but the men's locker-room opens in to this central storage space while the women's does not. The storage space has a set of double doors that leads into the gymnasium (it lines up roughly with the entrance doorway) and once had an exterior entrance/exit which is now boarded up. In the locker-room located in the south corner, there is a stairs leading to the second floor. The second floor is one room and spans over the storage room and men's locker room. There was once an exterior entrance to this space serviced by a stairs on the backside of the building.



White windows are made of wood and are symmetrically organized on the facades of the building. On the first floor of the front façade there are two six over six double hung sash windows which flank the entrance. On the second story there are two

closer together single sash, six pane windows which also flank the entrance. The first floor façade is seven bays wide while the second floor is five bays wide. The entrance protrudes one bay out from the building and on the north corner there is another doorway which was added later (formerly there was a window in this space).

The northeast and southwest façades are ten window bays long. The windows on these façades are situated high on the wall. All are six pane wooden window spaces, but most of the spaces are boarded up. The second stories of these façades also have six pane window spaces with more of the original windows still intact. The second story façade is also ten bays long. Both façades have entrances to the building two bays from the back end. These entrances lead into the gymnasium just in front of the locker rooms. The southwest façade entrance has a ramp leading up to it while the northeast entrance only has a stoop. The northeast façade is also differentiated by the bathroom space which protrudes out one bay from the building and is two bays wide (one for each bathroom).

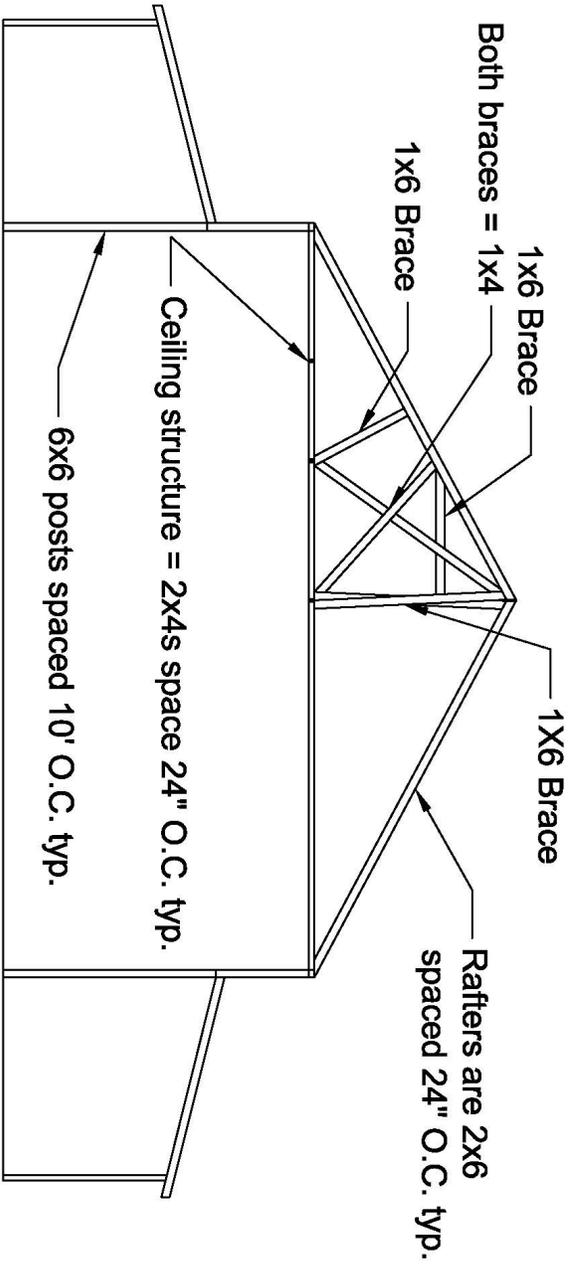


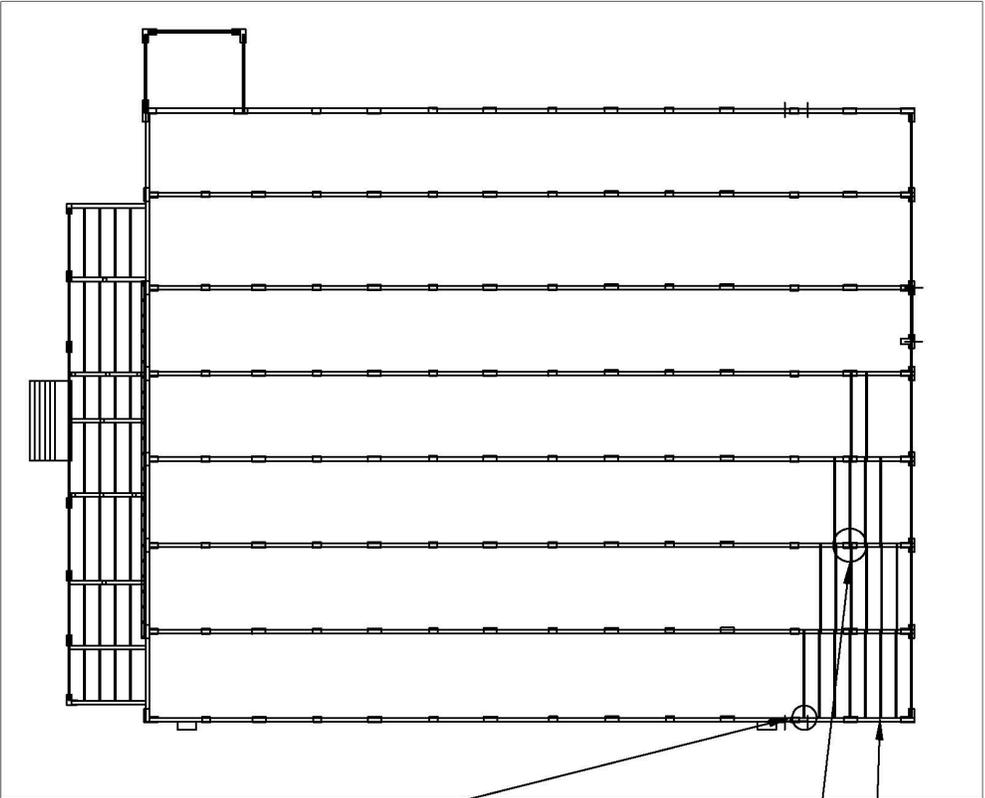
The first and second stories of the back façade are flush with one another; a weatherboard is the only separation. There are five boarded up windows on the first story, all to the south of the entrance to the storage space. On the second story there are two paired window spaces, which house two, nine over nine double-hung sash windows each. These spaces are also boarded up and lie to the south of the second story entrance which lies directly above the first story entrance (it is also boarded up).

The roof of Rocket Hall is pyramidal. It is two tiered, one roof over the two-story basketball court space and a peripheral roof covering the one story wings and entrance. There are no gables except for an ornamental gable over the front entrance. The roof is wood frames by 2 x 4s and is a vernacular truss system from which suspends the interior ceiling. The roof is decked with plywood, which is covered by green asphalt shingles, although the original roof was a metal, standing seam roof (some is still visible above the bathroom area).

The structure of the building is primarily made of wood, excluding the brick chimneys and brick piers, which serve as supports for the structure. The exterior wall is finished with board and baton siding, which is painted white (the boards are 1 x 10 and the batons are 1x4). The frame is a platform frame made of 2 x 4 stud walls, which sit upon a wood-framed floor structure. The beams (6 x 8) run from the front to the back of the building and the joists (2 x 8) run from side to side. This frame rests on a foundation of brick piers situated in a gridded formation. The original piers consist of red, hand-made brick and sink 5-6 courses below the surface. The brick piers of the porch and bathrooms are not as old as those under the gymnasium and are made of machine made brick with concrete footings.

### 1933 Rocket Hall Roof Structure Scale: $\frac{1}{8}'' = 1'$





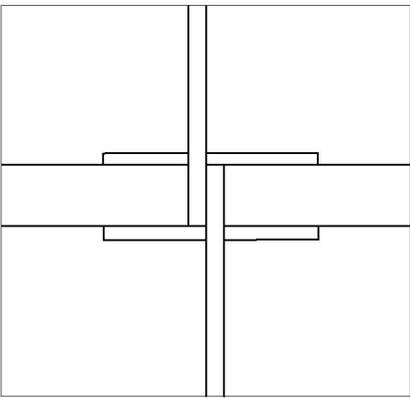
1933 Rocket Hall Floor Structure

Scale:  $\frac{1}{16}$ " = 1'



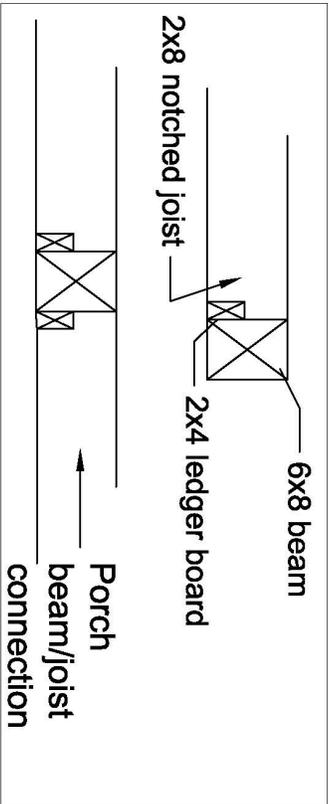
Joists spaced 2' O.C. Typ.

Joist/joist connection detail



Scale for details: 1" = 1'

Joist/beam connection



When entering the gymnasium, green, wooden stands on either side of the court are the first thing to be noticed. Bathrooms are located at the north corner of the space and locker rooms are located at the end opposite of the entrance. The floor is made of a hardwood, most likely maple, and covers the entirety of the floor space (excluding the showers of the locker rooms which are concrete). The walls and ceiling are clad with wood planking. The columns are wood with beveled corners and are braced by three boards—two on each side and one behind. The columns are bracing the point where the second story wall meets the top of the lower roof. The side walls are painted green like the bleachers as are the structural posts (up until the bracing members when it is painted white). The ceiling and second story portions of the walls are painted white. Modern amenities have been added to the space with four space heaters replacing what used to be coal burning stoves are located in the four corners of the gymnasium.



The overall feel of the space is consistent with that of most gymnasiums. Focus is drawn to the basketball court. The space is symmetrically laid out both horizontally and vertically. Basketball hoops are at the extreme ends and the bleachers at the sides. The space draws the audience into the space through the central entrance where they then disperse to their seats. Audience service spaces are located at the front while player and faculty services are at the back. It is a basketball gymnasium through and through.

### **Condition Assessment**

#### Exterior

The building, built in 1933, is constructed on brick piers near the bottom of a small hill where a great deal of water drains during heavy precipitation. The structure itself appears to be balloon, with board and batten siding. The boards are 1"x10", and the battens are 1"x4". Due to the placement of the building at the dip of a hill it has suffered tremendous water damage, particularly on the southeast corner. It appears as though a gutter/drainage system was neither installed nor considered in the construction phase, as the degree of damage from backsplash alone is pronounced. The southeast corner of the building suffers the worst: the entire corner, platform and piers, has sunk into the ground and allowed greater exposure to moisture and, by proxy, termites. The insect damage has compromised the structural integrity of the platform floor, which has collapsed on the interior and proven an inaccessible, dangerous area beneath the gym.



Overlapping wood siding with backsplash damage



Termite damage on southeast corner, exposing brick pier

The southeast corner, on a much higher grade than the rest of the building and sinking into the earth, is constantly damp and much of the wooden sill has been eaten away by insects. Moss grows on the edge of the corner and the wood is stained with dirt and decaying organic material.

Water damage beneath the building is spreading: from the southeast corner to the northeast Water damage beneath the building is spreading: from the southeast corner to the northeast corner and spreading under the center of the building, water from inclement weather has pooled, compromising many of the bricks piers and giving moisture meter readings from 86.3 to 99.9. These extremely high readings are indicative of masonry compromised by massive amounts of water; 99.9 is the highest possible moisture reading. The brick piers, which are the primary support system beneath the structure, are not uniform in their construction. Varying in length from 2 to 2½ bricks and roughly 1 to 2 bricks in width, many of the piers suffer from rising damp, which facilitates a speedier deterioration. In part this can be attributed to some of the piers possessing concrete footings and others lacking footings entirely, exposing the brick to the moist earth.

If the drainage issue is not corrected, more of the structure may sink into soft earth, and many of the piers will deteriorate faster than they already are.



The southeast corner at rear with visible dip as it sinks



Note moss growing beneath the door

While the northeast side of the building (uphill) suffers the brunt of the waterlogged damage, the southwest side remains relatively dry. This can be attributed to much of the water gathering under the structure and compromising the central support piers. The rear of the gym, much like the northeast side, is also very damp. The area is shaded by trees that keep the space warm and dark, encouraging the growth of mosses on the rear brick piers and wood siding. The back windows, presumably once outfitted with glass panes, have been boarded up. A large amount of human detritus (wood, shingles, coal, broken glass, et cetera) has been abandoned behind the gym and contributes negatively to the structural integrity, as much of the organic material is pushed up against the side of the building. The placement of these items traps moisture and encourages mold and mosses, also acting as a convenient conduit for insects to access the structure from the rear.



Brick pier at rear of building, overgrown with moss



Piles of refuse



Moss grows on one of the brick piers, water damage along bottom edge

The southwest side of the building is relatively dry by comparison, the piers settled on a small dirt ridge likely caused by the poor drainage that funnels the majority of any water beneath the structure. There is little sign of water infiltration here on the wood siding, although backsplash from the lack of drainage system has pressed dirt up against the piers and eaten away at some of the bricks.



Red clay backsplash on brick piers and southwest chimney



Moisture damaged, compromised brick



Brick piers beneath the gym, as seen from the southwest side

The front of the structure, primarily facing northwest, is visually in the best condition. The porch addition sports brick piers that are newer than the originals from 1933 by many decades and have sustained no visible damage. The wood siding mimics the original design and appears in excellent shape, the northern corner of the building being the only part that is in danger strictly because it falls within the natural drainage

flow area that winds its way under the building. Unlike the southeast corner its piers are stable and no part of the structure has sunk into the ground. It would be extremely wise to stabilize the area regardless before managing the water infiltration issue.

For the most part, the roof appears to be in excellent condition. A hanging truss system suspends a bead board ceiling over the basketball court—while the roofing itself appears to have been a metal (standing or flat) seam roof in the past, it has more recently been replaced with asphalt. The exposed rafters on the exterior are in decent shape, save for several at the east corner, where the moisture and detritus has accumulated and the building is sinking into the ground.



East corner rafter, a victim of black rot

### Interior

The interior of the building is primarily wide open, being a basketball court with built-in bleachers flanking each side. While the brick piers beneath the floor seem stable enough to hold static loads the floor itself is dangerously springy for the entire length of

its extent, in particular near the back left corner (the southeast corner). There, one of the many posts lining the sides has extensive termite damage around the base, and the floor is increasingly shakier due to the nature of the wood supporting it, which is riddled with insect damage. The finish on much of the court has worn away from time and lack of care.



Interior view from W corner, looking at damaged SE corner



Interior view of court from N corner

The far back area of the gym, past the basketball hoop (which includes two showers, two locker rooms, and an open space for prep/storage), the structural integrity appears largely fair save for the southeast corner itself. It encompasses the entirety of the “Home Team” locker room, and due to the water infiltration from the exterior and the insect damage to the supporting joists the entire floor has collapsed in on itself. The worst of the damage is here, and if any efforts to preserve the structure are taken this particular area would need to be dismantled and removed to prevent the rot and termites from spreading further.



Floor of Home Team locker room, collapsed due to moisture and insect damage



Supporting post in east corner of gym interior, termite damage



East corner, beneath the built-in bleachers

In each of the corners of the gym there was once a heater, the exhaust of which was expelled through a chimney in either the ceiling above it, or the wall next to it. The flashing around these exhausts was either not done well or has deteriorated and allowed water to permeate the bead board and asphalt shingles, as the paint around the pipes has

begun to peel and the wood beneath it is in poor condition.



South corner heating exhaust damage



East corner heating exhaust damage



Damaged beadboard of southwest side over bleachers



North corner bathroom additions with water damage

The structural integrity of the gym walls remains primarily intact. The front wall, which may have once been an exterior wall before the porch addition (although this is not entirely substantiated by records), appears to be bowing outwards and away from the rest of the structure. Further in-depth investigation needs to be held to explore the origins of this problem, but it is something to keep an eye on.



Interior of front gym wall, wall pulling away from door frame porch  
(exposed fiberglass insulation visible)



Exterior of same gym wall on left, as seen from porch  
(visibly bowing outward)



SW clerestory window, covered with plastic sheeting



SW "Visiting Team" locker room window, paned

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<http://pdfhost.focus.nps.gov/docs/NRHP/Text/64500131.pdf>

## **Part 2: Treatment and Work Recommendations**

## Overview of needs and priorities

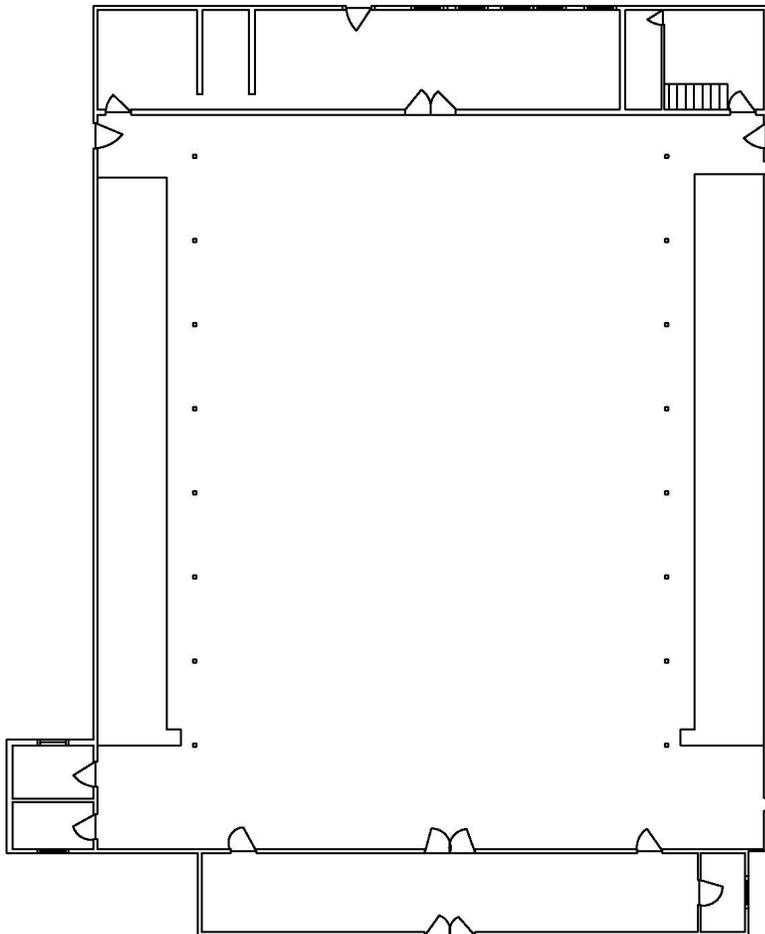
- Posts
  - Many posts are showing signs of wear and tear. Cracking along the faces of the posts should be monitored.
  - Some posts are bowing due to foundation settling at the east corner. These posts should be monitored when foundation work is done to the east corner.
  - The third post from the southeast end of the row should be braced with tie rods to prevent further cracking.
  - The post at the east end of the gym has suffered considerable termite damage; it should be strengthened with an epoxy or other consolidate.
- Brick piers
  - Some bricks of the piers are deteriorated, replace and repoint when necessary.
  - Brick piers under the east corner should be investigated and replaced or repaired when necessary.
- Northwest wall of gym
  - This wall is bowing considerably.
  - Not much is known of the source, but it could be from roof bracings, foundation settlement, or perhaps the porch addition.
  - We recommend investigation as to the wall structure and condition of the wooden stud walls.
  - Possible remediation efforts could include tie rods to brace the wall from continued bowing and/or opening up the wall and reinforcing the structure with additional braces and studs.
- East corner foundation
  - Excavation and investigation of this corner is absolutely necessary.
  - The foundation joists, and beams should be replaced and raised to their original height.
  - Ground should be graded in a way where there is space between the bottom of the wood subfloor and the ground.
  - The overall slope of the site will remain a problem and proactive measures should be taken in the form of storm water drainage systems.
  - We recommend a French drain to be installed along the entirety of the northeast side, eventually draining into the storm sewer at the front of the property (see site plan). See Appendix for French drain detail.
  - Soil should be graded along the back side of the structure and another French drain should be installed. The drain will empty into the lawn past the south corner of the structure (see site plan).

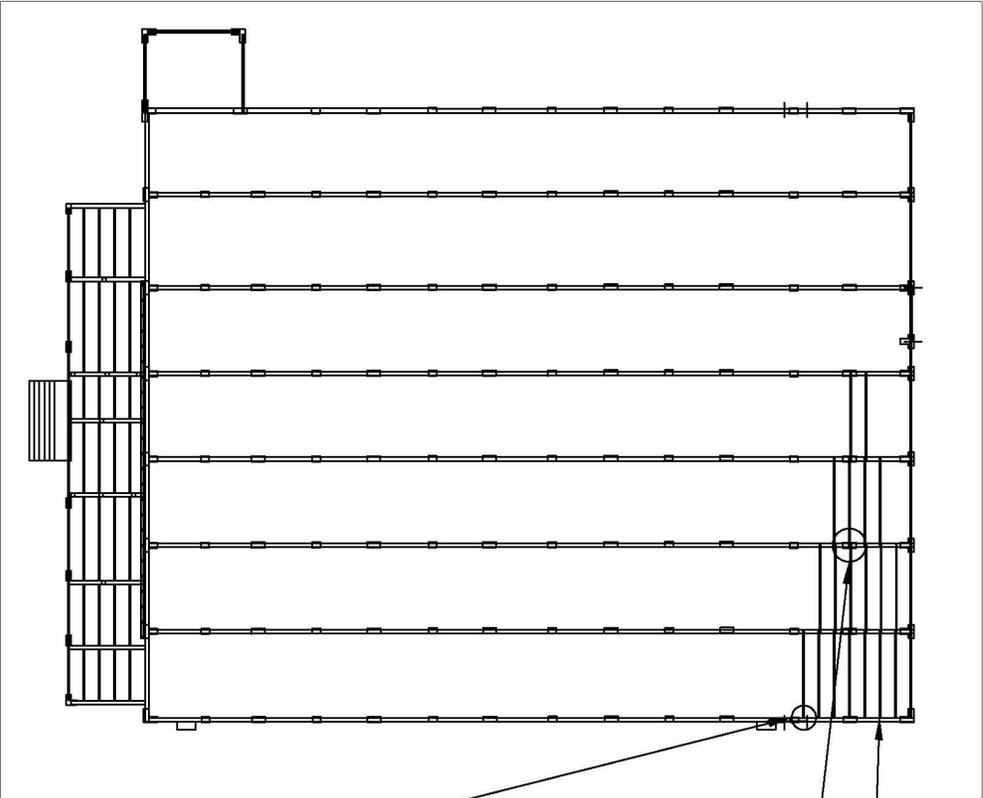
- Bathrooms
  - There is considerable floor sagging in center of bathroom addition.
  - Foundation of bathrooms should be investigated and likely be reinforced.
  - We recommend adding a foundation pier with additional wood joisting and perhaps another beam to stabilize the center of the floor.
  
- Roof
  - Moisture is penetrated the roof structure near the chimney openings at each corner of the gym. We recommend investigation as to the source of this failure. The chimneys will likely need to be re-flashed.
  - Rafters on the east corner of the building are deteriorating and should be replaced when necessary and spliced when material is salvageable.
  - When the shingles are replaced we recommend re-roofing using metal sheets, preferably standing seam. This is authentic to the original roof and will serve as a long-lasting replacement.
  - A drip edge and flashing should be installed at roof overhangs.
  
- Trees
  - We recommend the removal of four trees which are encroaching on the structure. (see site plan)
  - At the front of the structure, tree branches are dangerously close to the chimney openings and are at risk of burning or of clogging the openings.
  - The proximity of the trees to the roof also puts the structure at higher risk of animal infiltration and excessive organic material growth.
  
- Porch Foundation
  - The original foundation of the porch was poorly engineered with beams not supported by piers and joist/beam connections without ledger boards.
  - These issues have been remediated by the addition of modern piers and sistering of joists.
  - The current state of the porch and its foundations appears to be stable.

Appendix A: Plans and Charts

1933 Rocket Hall Floor Plan

Scale:  $\frac{1}{16}'' = 1'$





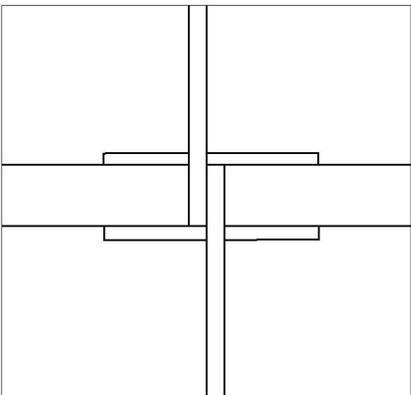
1933 Rocket Hall Floor Structure

Scale:  $\frac{1}{16}$ " = 1'



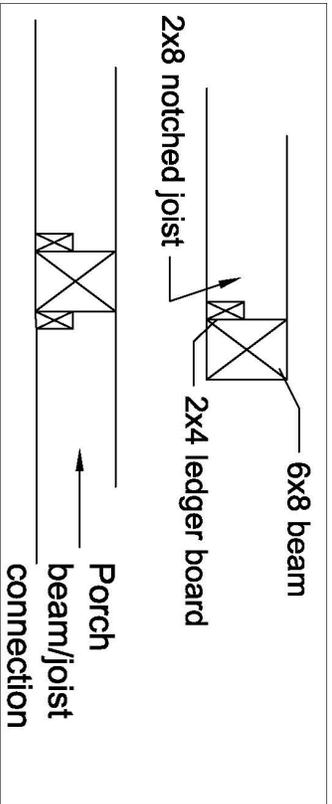
Joists spaced 2' O.C. Typ.

Joist/joist connection detail

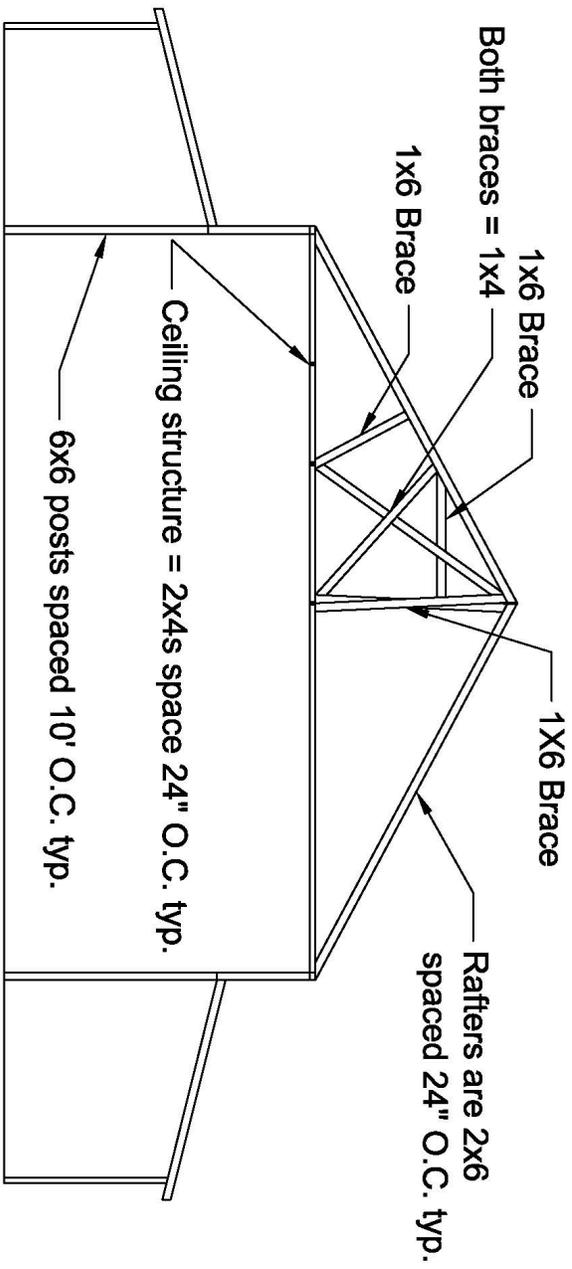


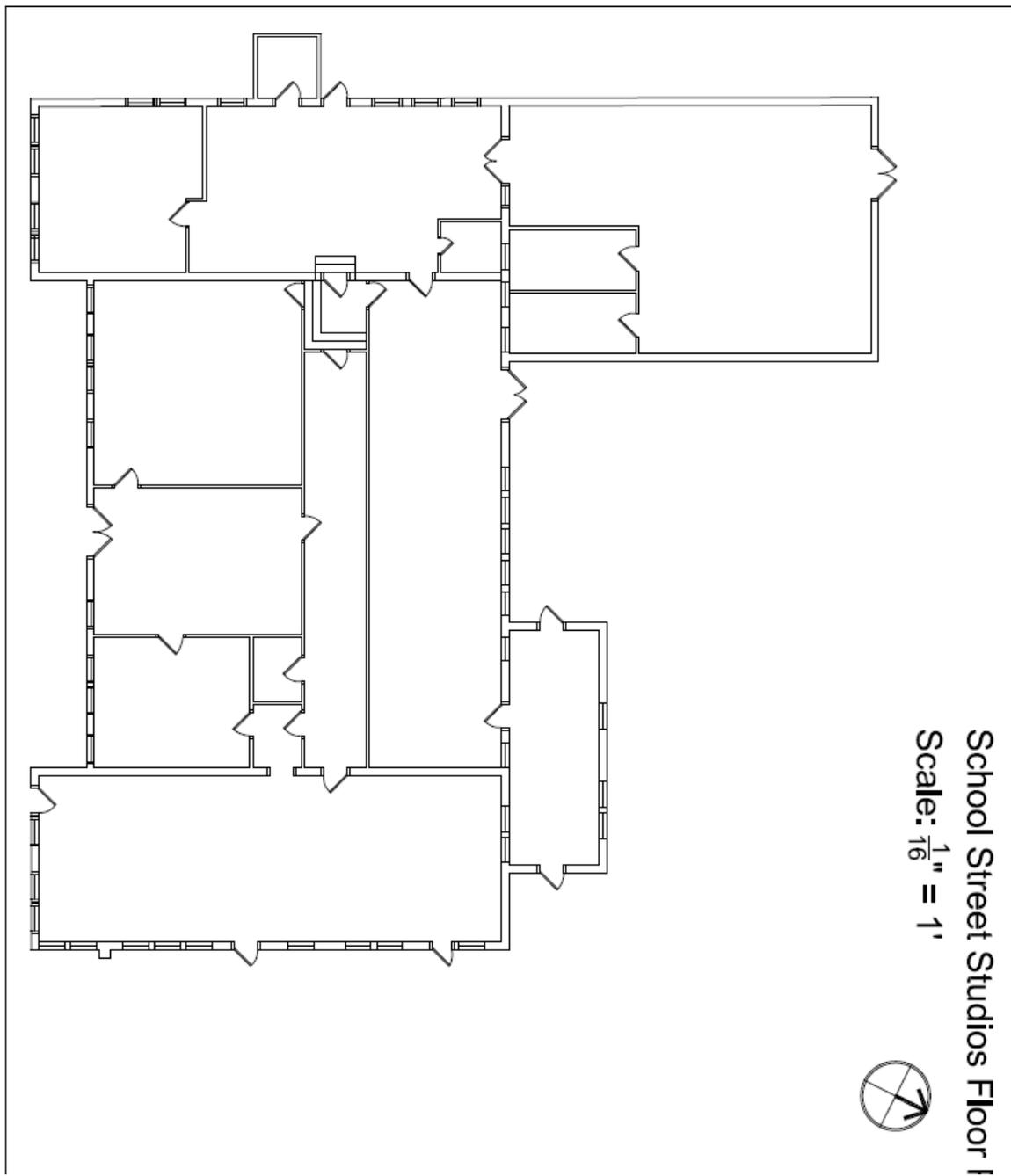
Scale for details: 1" = 1'

Joist/beam connection

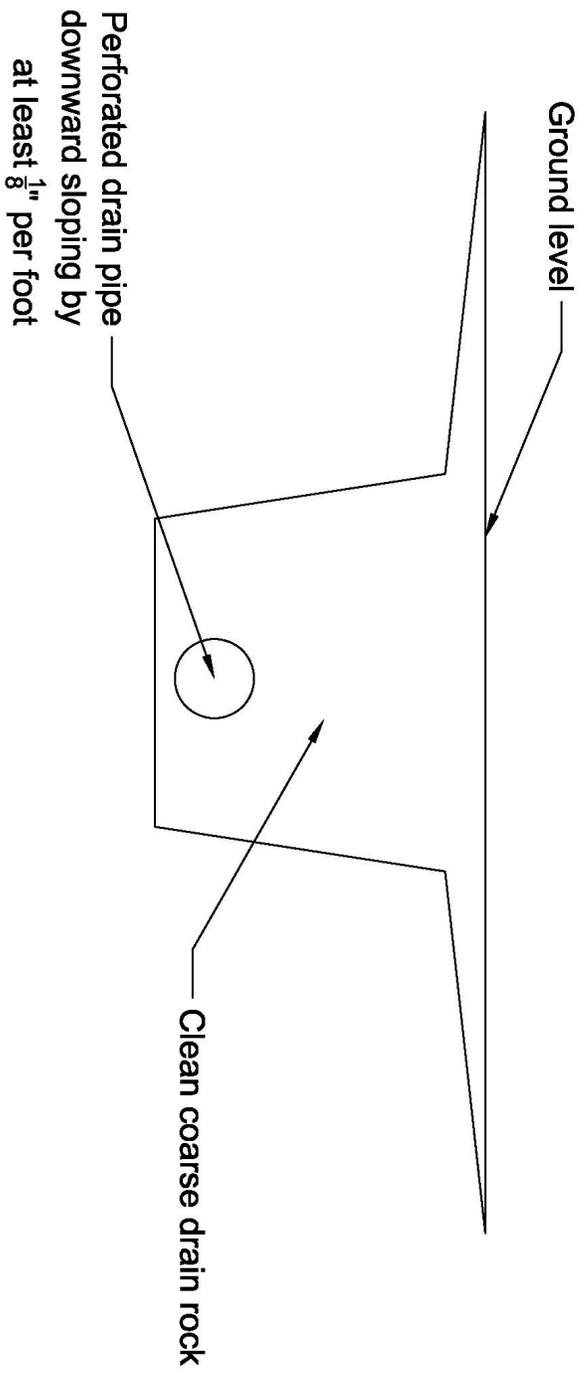


1933 Rocket Hall Roof Structure  
Scale:  $\frac{1}{8}$ " = 1'





**Rocket Hall - French Drain Detail  
(Drawing not to scale)**



## Window condition table

### KEY

P - Paned Windows

B - Boarded-up

C - Chicken Wire

> listed from front to rear

### Southwest Side

1st Floor	Clerestory
PC	PB
PC	PB
BC	PB
BC	PB
BC	P
BC	BC
BC	PB
BC	PB
BC	P
BC	P

### Northeast Side

1st Floor	Clerestory
N/A	P
BC	vented
BC	PB
BC	PB
BC	PB
BC	vented
B	PC
BC	PC
B	PC
	B